

**Human Right Commission
May 4, 2010 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mary Bixby, Scott Dean, Jessica Macy, Thomas O'Toole, and Marissa Todd

Members Excused: Negar Jackson, Mark Thomas

Staff Present: Steve Hollis, Marie Glaze, Fred Boeckmann

Others Present: Anne Zellhoefer, Refugee and Immigration Services

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Vice-Chair Jessica Macy.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Bixby moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by O'Toole and passed unanimously.
- III. **Approval of April 6, 2010 meeting minutes:** Todd made a motion to approve the April 6, 2010 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by O'Toole and passed unanimously.
- IV. **Guest Presentation:** Anne Zellhoefer from Refugee and Immigration Services provided the commission with a broad overview of the work the organization does in the community. The organization is a self sustaining, non-profit program of the Catholic Diocese of Jefferson City. Refugee and Immigration Services has been operating in Columbia since the 1970's when refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia started arriving here. Over the course of the next thirty years refugees have come to Columbia from Bosnia, Central Africa, Cuba, Burma and most recently Iraq. The numbers have risen from 50 per year during the first 20 years to 300 in 2009. Since 1980 the Federal Reception and Placement Grant has provided \$900.00 per capita. This amount had never been adjusted for inflation until January, 2010. It is now \$1800.00 per person. The government expects that the refugee should become self-sufficient within three months making it necessary for Refugee and Immigration Services to rely heavily on other grants to help in providing the basic services. In the past most refugees coming to this area have been single individuals, the recent trend has been families. When they come into a community they are eligible for community based services such as Medicaid and food stamps. Each year the number of refugees is set by a Presidential Determination and for the past several years that number has been 80,000. There are currently 120 countries that re-settle refugees with the U.S. and Canada being the largest. To gain refugee status a person must apply to the UN High Commission for Refugees and undergo background checks and interviews. The entire process can take up to three years or more. In response to a question raised by Todd about how refugees come to be in Columbia, Zellhoefer stated that Columbia is a welcoming community for refugees with a job market that is fairly robust. The refugees feel safe and welcome here and to her knowledge none of fallen through the cracks. In fact Columbia has the best employment numbers in the state with an 80% employment rate within the first six months. Hollis asked if there were many instances of discrimination and Zellhoefer responded that there were not. With regard to employment there is often misunderstanding or miscommunication due to language barriers and lack of education. Employers are often overly careful not to hire undocumented persons. In the housing arena the agency has worked with the same apartment management companies for a number of years which tends to minimize any problems. Hollis asked what are the refugees biggest needs. Zellhoefer said English language instruction and jobs. A number of the new refugees are on the low end of English proficiency and education which creates challenges. Healthcare is another big issue and the agency works with the University Health Center with a high level of cooperation. Refugee and Immigration Services contracts with the Adult Learning Center at Douglass School for ESL instruction.

V. Old Business: Hollis reported on the revision of the Human Rights Enhancement Program RFP. He reported that an on-line grant management system for Social Services funding is being purchased in conjunction with United Way and can be used for other things including the Human Rights Enhancement Program making it more accessible and simpler. It also allows for the creation of various reports. He will be meeting with United Way in the morning. In response to Macy's inquiry about the deadline for spending the money Hollis indicated the funds need to be allocated before October 1. He will need to put forth a council bill to allow the city manager to authorize the contracts. Hollis mentioned that George Frissell is interested in applying and he will contact Symone about the MAC Scholars. Met with Peter Stiepleman at West Boulevard, but the civil rights museum project currently has enough funding.

VI. New Business: There was no new business.

VII. Staff Reports:

a. Manager of Human Services: Hollis shared information about Community Techknowledge (CTK) the company from which the grant management system is being purchased. The CEO is a former United Way director. Hollis was pleased that the system is not a packaged product.

b. Law Department: No Report

c. Human Rights Specialist: Glaze submitted the following written report: *Tuesday, April 13th staff hosted a meeting that included Roger Worthington, Noor Azizan Gardner, Nathan Stephens and Alisa Warren to discuss cultural competency training. Discussion centered on these key questions: Is there a need and desire for cultural competency training? Is there enough quality, affordable training available? All in attendance agreed the best way to determine if there is a need or desire is to gather data (simple survey). This lead to discussion regarding the design of the survey. The group will meet again in Mid-May to continue discussion and planning.*

Wednesday, April 14th staff attended a presentation by S. David Mitchell, an associate professor of law at the University of Missouri School of Law. The presentation title "Can You Hear Me Now?: Silencing Communities of Color Through Felon Disenfranchisement Laws" is part of the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative.

Sunday, April 18th staff was a part of the Civility in Faith and Family Conference given by the Faith and Education Collaborative. The focus of the conference was to learn how to have open and honest personal communication with people of other faiths and beliefs, as well as within one's own family and faith community, without being judgmental.

Tuesday, April 20th staff attended the Diversity Training sponsored by the United Way and MEM. The training was conducted by Dale Wright and Shann Sievers. The training was basic and general, but from the response of the participants, it was satisfactory. It is staff's opinion that there remains a need for additional training.

Tuesday, April 20th staff attended a lecture by local historian Wynna Faye Elbert. The Black History of Columbia from 1865 to present. This event was well attended by a diverse group of people and featured slides and artifacts from an era not known to many Columbia residents.

Thursday, April 22nd we hosted the Second Annual Fair Housing Symposium. There were several panel participants: Cheryl Davidson, HUD, Alisa Warren, MCHR, Cyrus

Dashtaki, Former Assistant Attorney General, Rigel Oliveri, UMC Law Professor, Carol Harl, Local Real Estate Broker, Valerie Shaw, Executive Vice President Commerce Bank and our own Tom Lata. Mayor McDavid was with us briefly and presented a Fair Housing Month Proclamation. In addition to our Human Rights Updates weekly e-mail we were able to access a few other e-mail lists including the Columbia Apartment Association, the Columbia Board of Realtors and the Minority Men's Network. A press release was issued the Monday prior to the event resulting in media coverage including two interviews, one on KFRU and the other in the Columbia Daily Tribune (copy enclosed), as well as coverage on KOMU-TV. About 35 to 40 attended the event and those in attendance seemed to enjoy the event and appreciate the information they received. Staff would like to thank Commissioner Macy for sharing her time especially since we went over the scheduled time by an hour.

Monday, April 26th staff met with volunteers from MASW to discuss the upcoming presentation by David Harris in Missouri regarding unconscious bias among the police. The visit to Columbia is scheduled for Tuesday, June 15th. Staff would like for the commission to consider designating a representative of the commission on the event planning committee.

Staff would like to share that President Obama extended health care rights to gay partners on April 16th.

At our last meeting staff provided the commission with draft copies of proposed brochures for housing and employment outreach and asked for comments or feedback. To date no comment or feedback has been received. We are enclosing additional copies with the request that the commission be prepared to provide feedback at the commission meeting.

Glaze reported that the Fair Housing Symposium was quite a success with a lot of positive feedback. Commissioner Macy commented on the number and quality of questions asked during the symposium which contributed to the length of the event. Hollis spoke of an issue raised about the people attending the symposium, in fact that it was like "preaching to the choir" and in response to that issue he told the group about our new outreach approach. Macy noted that Phil (Steinhaus) from the housing authority was at the meeting, but none of his staff attended. Hollis shared that actually a number of the staff was there including all the housing managers. Glaze noted that she met last Monday, April 26th and today with MASW representatives to discuss the upcoming David Harris event on Tuesday, June 15th at the Boone County Government Center. Glaze asked that the Commission consider a representative to attend the event planning committee. Professor Harris has jury duty the week that he is scheduled to be here, so he may have to cancel. Glaze noted that the new civil rights museum is on display at West Boulevard. Hollis explained the civil rights museum for the benefit of those who didn't know about it. Glaze distributed information about a community discussion on race and diversity in Columbia for KBIA's Intersection program on Monday, May 10th. She and several other people are scheduled to be a part of the panel. Hollis reported that staff has been working on the issue of cultural competency/diversity training. Staff feels there is a lack of affordable, quality cultural competency, diversity training available for non-profits and for profit groups. Staff has assembled a group of people to discuss conducting a needs assessment and based on the assessment, where we go from there. Staff's hope is that the University might take this on as a research project. Hollis repeated to the commission the request for a commissioner to be involved in the David Harris event. He stated that it is a project of MASW, they actually have gotten a grant to pay for the expenses, and as staff we are reluctant to be overly involved but it would be suitable to commission involvement. Dean, Macy and O'Toole expressed interest. Glaze

agreed to inform these commissioners as the planning meetings are scheduled. Hollis stated the City Council is reviewing all boards and commissions to decide if they need as many, more or less. This commission has been assigned to Laura Nauser. Boeckmann shared that in his 23 years they've never gotten rid of any boards or commissions.

VIII. Commission Reports

Citizens Police Review Board: Bixby reported the Board has not had any cases, it has had some action but no cases. She said there has been letters to the board regarding treatment of people, but none have been investigable. There are a couple of cases working through the process. There is an education component at every meeting and one of the CPRB members who is a law professor at Columbia College presented on case law on search and seizure at the 2nd meeting. So far there have been presentations from a defense attorney, prosecuting attorney and Dan Viets (ACLU) at the meetings. The Board has also attended the police training facility. Bixby passed out brochures and said there have been nudges from the public for the board to get going. The board doesn't get involved until a case has gone all the way through Internal Affairs and the Chief decides that something was not right. The Board has had 3 hours of training on internal affairs, use of force a couple of times and the next meeting the presenter will be the Chair of Black Studies. He calls ways of describing things and using languages "scripts" and he will talk about "scripts" that go on between police and alleged violators of the law. The Board is trying to get people to act as representatives for citizens who may be afraid to come forward without assistants. Brochures are everywhere in town except the post office. Bixby further stated the Board has been preparing and will be ready for their first case. Bixby reported that there is a group NACOLE (National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement) who will be having a conference in Seattle in September. She reported that a budget was hurriedly put together to send a couple of the board members, but the council only approved sending one person.

IX. Public Comment: No Public Comment

X. Closed Session to Discuss Pending Cases Pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo.: The commission agreed no closed session was needed as there was no new information.

XI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Hollis, Manager of Human Services